

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /064 W

-----079549 182151Z /13

O R 182121Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1682

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5636

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BL

SUBJECT: BOLIVIAN POST-ELECTORAL POLITICAL SITUATION

1. NINE DAYS AFTER THE BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS OF JULY 9, THE SITUATION IS CALM, BUT UNCERTAIN. NO DEFINITIVE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS IS IN SIGHT, NOR IS IT LIKELY TO BE FOR SEVERAL DAYS. MOST BOLIVIAN UNIVERSITIES, INCLUDING THOSE IN LA PAZ, REMAIN CLOSED AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS. OVER THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND (MONDAY WAS LA PAZ DAY) ELECTION RETURNS AND POLITICAL STATEMENTS WERE OFF THE FRONT PAGE OF THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS. SOME UNOFFICIAL VOTING RETURNS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LA PAZ CONTINUE TO COME OUT WITH THE RACE BETWEEN PEREDA AND SILES TOO CLOSE TO CALL. NATIONWIDE, PEREDA CONTINUES TO BE THE LEADING CANDIDATE WITH SLIGHTLY OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

2. HOWEVER, INSPITE OF THE SURFACE CALM, THERE IS CONCERN AND TENSION. PEREDA FEELS THE OPPOSITION IS TRYING TO DISCREDIT HIS VICTORY. VICTOR PAZ BELIEVES HE WAS CHEATED BY PEREDA FORCES WHO

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HAD REPORTEDLY PROMISED NOT TO COMMIT FRAUD AGAINST HIS PARTY OR CARRY OUT CAMPAIGN OBSTRUCTIONS IN THE PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD. SILES ZUAZO IS CALIMING VICTORY AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION FORCES AND HAS SHOWN NO WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE UNP. THE MILITARY, IN LARGE PART, APPEARS GRIPPED BY SEIGE MENTALITY AND CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY CHOICE FOR BOLIVIA NOW IS BETWEEN PEREDA OR "THE COMMUNISTS".

3. THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT, JULIO MANTILLA, HAS EXPRESSED PRIVATELY THAT IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SEPARATE THE FRAUDULENT VOTES FROM THE HONEST VOTES. WE UNDERSTAND THE OPPOSITION PARTIES MIGHT ASK FOR AN ANNULMENT OF THE ELECTIONS. MANTILLA HAS STILL NOT DECIDED WHETHER ANNULMENT OF THE ELECTIONS IS JUSTIFIED. HE SEEMS DETERMINED TO BUY TIME IN HOPES THAT A PRAGMATIC SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT ELECTORAL MESS MIGHT EMERGE BEFORE HE IS FORCED TO AUTHENTICATE THE ELECTION RESULTS ON JULY 31. THE PRAGMATIC SOLUTION WOULD BE A POLITICAL COALITION ACCEPTABLE TO THE LARGE MAJORITY OF BOLIVIANS.

4. AT THIS POINT, ONE OF THE KEY ELEMENTS IS THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE CENTER OPPOSITION PARTIES -- BERNAL AND PAZ. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED INDICATIONS THAT THESE PARTIES MAY BEGIN TO PUT OUT FEELERS TO TEST THE POLITICAL WATERS AND TO DETERMINE IF AN ACCEPTABLE, NEGOTIATED COMPROMISE CAN BE ARRANGED. ALSO, WE UNDERSTAND THE MNR-H OF PAZ MIGHT FORMALLY CHALLENGE IN THE COURTS THE VOTING RETURNS FROM ALL BOLIVIAN DEPARTMENTS EXCEPT ORURO AND CHUQUISACA.

5. AT PRESENT THERE APPEAR TO BE FOUR POSSIBLE OUTCOMES TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION: (A) PEREDA WINS OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND FORMS A COALITION WITH PAZ AND/OR BERNAL; (B) PEREDA WINS LESS THAN 50 PERCENT AND FORMS A

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COALITION WITH PAZ AND/OR BERNAL; (C) PEREDA WINS MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND GOES IT ALONE; OR (D) ANNULMENT OF THE ELECTIONS. THE SITUATION IS STILL TOO UNCERTAIN TO ASSIGN PROBABILITIES TO THESE ALTERNATIVES.
BOEKER

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